



PRESENTATION--USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks, second from left, presents the Kiowa County Commission with \$2.2 million check for renovation of the Kiowa County courthouse. Those taking part in the ceremony were Dennis Mesa, regional director for U.S. Senator Sam Brownback; Banks; Earl Liggett, Kiowa County Commissioner; Gene West, Kiowa County Commission chairman; Don Richards, Kiowa County commissioner; and Gary Smith, business and community programs director for USDA Rural Development in Kansas.

## Kiowa County accepts \$2.2 million from Rural Development for courthouse renovation

By Holly Martin

Kiowa County commissioners accepted a ceremonial check for \$2.2 million on June 30 to help renovate and improve the county courthouse that was severely damaged in the May 2007 tornado.

While the building was one of the few that survived the storm, it has been uninhabitable since then. All of the offices that were housed in the courthouse are still being operated out of trailers, just south of the building. But by this time next year, the Kiowa County commissioners hope to be moving into a newly renovated space.



The check, presented by Chuck Banks, USDA Rural Development state director, represented a \$1,923,000 grant and \$300,000 loan from USDA's Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program. In addition to the Rural Development funds, the project will additionally be funded through insurance proceeds, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Kansas Division of Emergency Management and county contributions and donations.

Gene West, chairman of the Kiowa County Commission, said the new courthouse renovations will bring the building up to date.

"We made it a 100 years with the old building. We hope that it will now be ready for another 100," West said.

Built in 1914, the courthouse will have major upgrades including many "green" technologies such as geothermal heating and cooling and a rainwater recovery system. West says they hope to achieve a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold standard. Construction is scheduled to begin on July 7 and last approximately 300 days.

The Kiowa County courthouse is an important symbol of the strength of the Greensburg community, said Chuck Banks. USDA Rural Development has played a key role in several projects in the rebuilding efforts. Just two days prior to the courthouse announcement, the agency announced a partnership with United Way and Red Cross that will enable an additional 50 self-help homes to be built.

"Greensburg is a model of success," Banks said. "It has really been a team effort," he said.

West agreed. "USDA has been very active in helping our community. We appreciate all they have been able to do, especially with timelines. Sometimes it is difficult to do things in a speedy manner, but they have been able to do that for us."

In addition, West credits local efforts including the Long Range Recovery team for helping Greensburg become a thriving community again.

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